

Remarks

The Applicants have amended Claim 1 to incorporate the subject matter of Claim 7. Hence, Claim 7 has been cancelled. Also, Claim 8 has been amended to depend from Claim 1 in view of the cancellation of Claim 7.

Claim 1 has further been amended to change “low” to “lower” in all instances to help define the fact that Claim 1 is directed to differences in rigidity or differences in strength (see Claim 1 as originally filed). Utilization of the term “lower” illustrates those differences on a relative basis compared to another component that has a “higher” rigidity or strength.

Claim 1 has been amended to insert “lower-rigidity” and “lower-strength” in the two locations following the word “both.”

Finally, Claim 18 has been amended to correct a typographical error.

Entry of the above amendments and cancellation into the official file is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-23 stand rejected under 35 USC §112 as being indefinite. The Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner’s helpful comments directed to Claim 1 with respect to the “or both FRP layer.” As noted above, the Applicants have amended Claim 1 in both instances of use of the term “both FRP layer” to further define that phraseology to recite “both lower-rigidity and lower-strength FRP layer.” The Applicants respectfully submit that this clarifies that the phrase FRP layer refers to the situation where the FRP layer has lower rigidity and lower strength. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-23 stand rejected under 35 USC §103 as failing to comply with a written description requirement. The Applicants again note the Examiner’s helpful comments with respect to what is meant by “low rigidity” and “low strength.” As noted above, the Applicants

have amended Claim 1 to change all instances of "low" into "lower" to emphasize that the Applicants seek to highlight the differences in rigidity and/or strength. Utilization of the term "lower" makes it quite clear to those skilled in the art that the Applicants are claiming this difference in rigidity or strength relative to other portions having a "higher" rigidity and/or strength. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-6, 9, 10, 13 and 23 stand rejected under 35 USC §102 over JP '846. The Applicants respectfully submit that this rejection is now moot in view of the incorporation of the subject matter of Claim 7 into Claim 1. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 7, 8 and 18-22 stand rejected under 35 USC §103 over JP '846. The Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's detailed comments hypothetically applying JP '846 against those claims. The Applicants nonetheless respectfully submit that JP '846 is not applicable for the reasons set forth below.

JP '846 discloses an FRP panel for an automobile wherein a core material is provided between a pair of FRP skin layers 3,4 and, at the end portion, the FRP skin layers are joined directly to each other. It is not clear that there is a difference in rigidity/a difference in strength between the pair of FRP skin layers. Although JP '846 describes that an end treatment can be easily performed on the end portion in which the pair of FRP skin layers are joined directly to each other (paragraph [0014]), actual structures of the respective FRP skin layers 3, 4 (direction of reinforcing fibers, angle of intersection thereof, number of laminated layers and the like) are not described.

The subject matter of the Applicants' claims is characterized in that, by providing a difference in rigidity/difference in strength to the FRP layer as recited in Claim 1, a trigger for breakage or deformation is intentionally provided (paragraph [0020] of the Applicants'

Specification). Hence, JP '846 neither discloses nor suggests behavior against a dynamic impact (not a comparison as to static conditions such as differences in rigidity/difference in strength).

In any event, it is the intention of JP '846 as repeated throughout its disclosure to provide for a high rigidity of material. As noted above with respect to paragraph [0014] of JP '846, the object is to obtain a "high rigidity" product. There is no disclosure of having differences in rigidity between various portions of the layers or the product. This is confirmed in numerous locations such as in paragraphs [0019] and [0037] wherein high rigidity is continuously mentioned. There are no teachings or suggestions to those skilled in the art that there could and should be "lower" rigidity and/or strength or differences in rigidity and/or differences in strength.

As a consequence, there is inherently no discussion with respect to providing such differences in strengths with respect to utilizing different amounts of reinforcing fibers, utilizing reinforcing fibers that have different properties or utilizing different orientations of reinforcing fibers. There simply is no such discussion in JP '846. This is particularly compelling when viewing other portions of JP '846 which refers to, for example, "FRP surface skins 13 and 14." These skins are referred to in pairs which leads those skilled in the art to understand that they are the same material having the same characteristics, i.e., rigidity and/or strength. There is no teaching or suggestion in JP '846 of those skins being made from different materials that would, could or should have differences in rigidity and/or strength. The Applicants therefore respectfully submit that JP '846 is completely deficient in disclosure that would cause one skilled in the art to move away from the singularly highly rigid material of JP '846 to a product that has elements with differences in rigidity and/or strength. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 11-17 stand rejected under 35 USC §103 over the hypothetical combination of Fujimoto with JP '846. The Applicants respectfully submit, however, that Fujimoto fails to cure the deficiencies set forth above with respect to JP '846. Withdrawal of the rejection is accordingly respectfully requested.

In light of the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully submit that the entire Application is now in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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